

# Star BUSINESS



## Many banks unlikely to pay dividends as BB tightens rules

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A good number of banks in the country will likely be unable to pay dividends after the Bangladesh Bank tightened the relevant rules through a notice yesterday.

Under the new rules, banks that have taken a deferral facility from the central bank to maintain provisioning requirements will be barred from paying dividends from 2024 onwards.

Additionally, banks with non-performing loans (NPLs) exceeding 10 percent of their total loans will not be able to declare dividends to shareholders from 2025.

NPLs reached a record Tk 345,764 crore at the end of December last year, accounting for 20.20 percent of total disbursed loans.

However, in its monetary policy for the January-June period of 2025, the central bank forecast a surge in NPLs, saying they are likely to exceed 30 percent of total outstanding loans by June.

Furthermore, lenders will be barred from declaring dividends if a penalty or fine is imposed due to a shortfall in the CRR (cash reserve ratio) and SLR (statutory liquidity ratio).

Another stipulation states that cash dividends can only be paid from the profits of the calendar year, but no cash dividends can be distributed from previously accumulated profits.

Officials of the central bank said many banks will be unable to pay dividends for 2025 because of the stricter rules.

Of the 61 scheduled banks in the country, only 10 to 12 may be able to pay a good dividend, they added.

Asif Khan, president of CFA Society Bangladesh, said the move was aimed at strengthening the banking sector's capital base.

### NEW DIVIDEND RULES FOR BANKS

- Dividends only from current year's profit
- No penalties due to CRR/SLR deficits
- Max classified loans/investments ratio to be 10% of total loans
- No provision shortfalls
- No dividends during deferral benefits
- Amount of dividend within 30% of paid-up capital

"Hence, it is a good move given the circumstances. Some of the stipulations look a bit harsh but can be relaxed in the future if needed," he said.

However, it is important that the National Board of Revenue also removes penalties for lower dividends caused by complying with the new rules, he added.

"The immediate reaction to this move in the stock market may be knee-jerk given our investors tend to be short-term oriented. However, for the long-term, this is a good decision for the economy and the stock market."

The central bank said the overall situation of the country's banking sector, protection of depositors' interests, financial capacity of banks, and attracting investors to shares of banks were factors considered.

Md Moniruzzaman, managing director and chief executive officer of Prime Bank Securities, said, "Although this may impact the dividend payment capacity of some weak banks, it will strengthen the capital base of banks. Keeping provisioning shortfalls year after year and paying out cash is a form of taking away the bank's money in disguise."

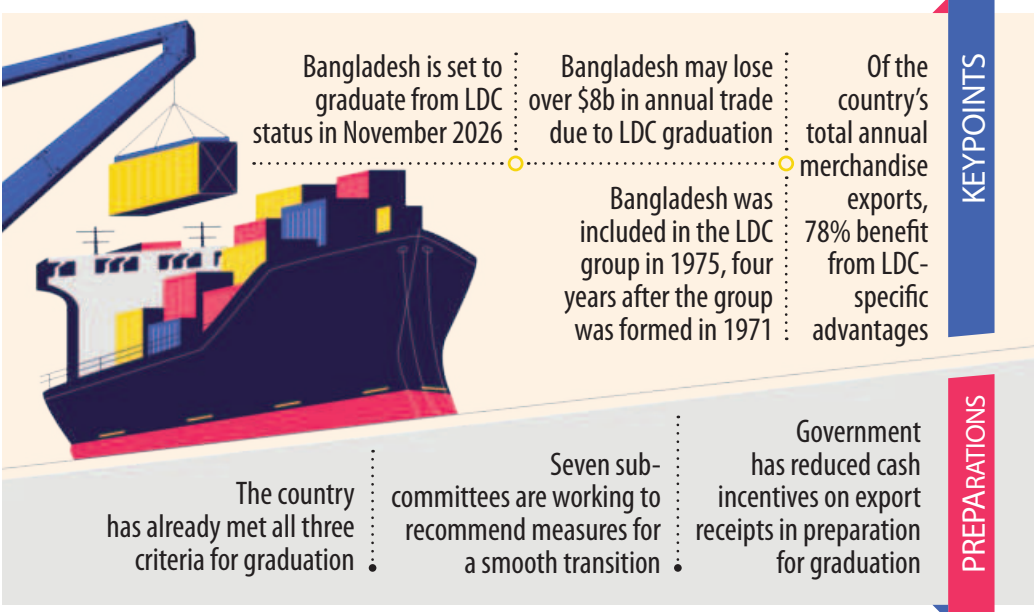
#### DIVIDEND PAYOUT RATIO FRAMED

The amount of dividend will be determined by the 'dividend payout ratio'.

The dividend payout ratio will be based on the ratio of the bank's declared dividend amount to the

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## CA confirms scheduled LDC graduation



REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Professor Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser of the interim government, yesterday instructed his cabinet colleagues to prepare for Bangladesh's status graduation from a least developed country (LDC) to a developing nation in November 2026, effectively doing away with all speculation.

Many, including a section of economists and businesspeople, were in favour of a deferment by a couple of years.

They reasoned that the economy needed time to cope with the severe fallout of the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and high global inflationary pressure over the last few years. Even some cabinet members had spoken out on several occasions recently about their doubts.

Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary, yesterday said the interim government had decided to keep to the schedule for availing the United Nations status graduation.

"The government has taken into consideration opinions from experts on whether the process would impact industries and settled on going for it," he said at a briefing at the Foreign Service Academy.

If any detrimental impact is identified, preparations will be made to overcome it, he said.

Besides, he said, benefits provided to Bangladesh for being an LDC would prevail for three years past the graduation.

"I think we have the ability to show our global competitiveness," Alam added.

Replying to a question, the press secretary said the pharmaceutical industry would also face no disruption in availing intellectual property rights.

Bangladesh has met all three preconditions for graduation, thanks to its economic development since the country attained independence in 1971.

The country was listed in the LDC grouping in 1975 to avail different benefits, such as zero-tariff and quota access to different countries, as the economy was on the verge of collapse following the Liberation War.

Such benefits have enabled Bangladesh to currently stand out as the second-largest garment exporter after China.

Bangladesh will lose trade worth over \$8 billion annually due to the withdrawal of post-LDC preferential trade benefits, for which the country would have to pay at least 12 percent



duty on goods shipments.

Currently, 78 percent of the country's exports avail LDC benefits in 38 countries.

The European Union has already assured that it will continue the LDC trade benefits for Bangladesh for three more years, up to 2029, as a grace period meant to enable a smooth transition.

The UK, Canada, and Australia have given similar commitments, except for some conditions.

Moreover, the World Trade Organization has also decided to grant the same grace period following Bangladesh's appeal for 12 years.

## BB gives two Islamic banks Tk 2,500cr more in emergency support

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday extended an additional Tk 2,500 crore in emergency liquidity support to Social Islami Bank and First Security Islami Bank without any security to help them address financial crises.

Of the sum, Tk 1,500 crore was provided to Social Islami Bank and Tk 1,000 crore to First Security Islami Bank for a tenure of 90 days, central bank officials said.

Mohammad Shahriar Siddiqui, a director and assistant spokesperson of BB, told The Daily Star that the Shariah-based banks had applied for liquidity support to meet their emergency needs earlier.

The liquidity support was approved yesterday, he said.

The fresh injection of funds into the ailing banks comes more than three months after the central bank provided Tk 22,500 crore to six crisis-hit banks without any security.

This development took place in November after the central bank had restructured the boards of 11 troubled banks following the political changeover in August last year.

### Of the sum, Tk 1,500 crore was provided to Social Islami Bank and Tk 1,000 crore to First Security Islami Bank

At that time, Social Islami Bank received Tk 4,000 crore and First Security Islami Bank Tk 5,500 crore.

It also reflected a shift in the stance adopted by the BB governor, who had earlier declined to provide fresh liquidity to scam-hit banks, citing concerns that it would stoke already elevated inflation.

The six crisis-hit banks are yet to repay the funds to the central bank.

After the political changeover last year, the central bank provided money to troubled banks with depositors' interests in mind and to prevent a bank run, which occurs when many customers rush to withdraw their funds from a lender, BB officials said.

Under the Awami League regime, the central bank provided liquidity support to some banks as per their demand, but there was virtually no accountability in the process.

Besides Social Islami Bank and First Security Islami Bank, Union Bank, Global Islami Bank, National Bank and Exim Bank had received central bank liquidity support in November last year.



## Most listed MNCs saw a drop in profits in Oct-Dec

AHSAN HABIB

Most listed multinational companies (MNCs) saw a year-on-year erosion of profits in the October to December period of FY25, mainly due to higher financing costs and macroeconomic challenges amid political uncertainty.

Among the 13 listed multinational companies in Bangladesh, nine have so far published their financial reports for the three-month period.

Analysing their financials in the quarter, Sandhani Asset Management found that four of the nine saw their profits drop year-on-year while one incurred higher losses and the rest logged higher profits.

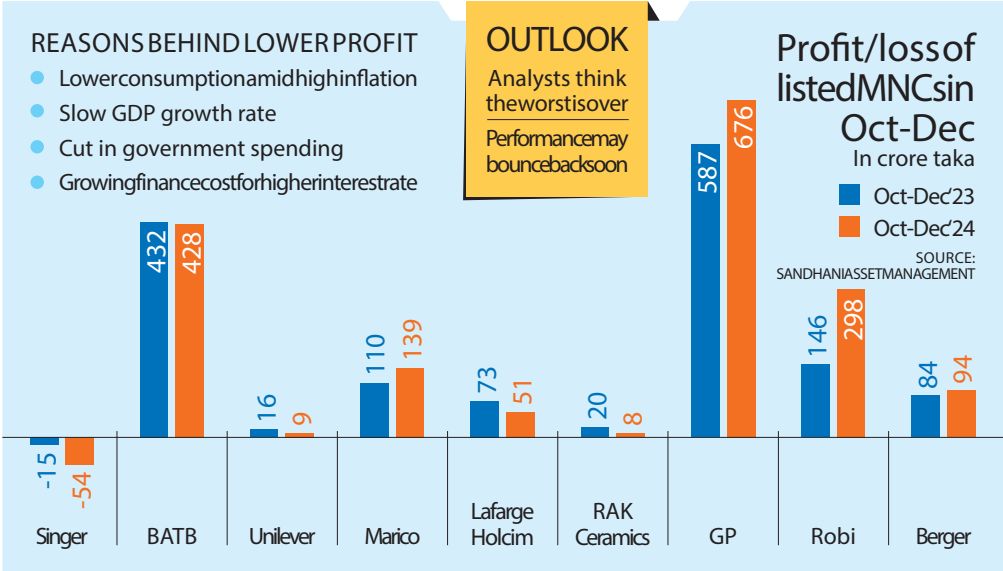
Thanks to the central bank's adoption of tight monetary and fiscal measures, aggregate demand in the country dropped and gross domestic product growth fell. So, the profits of multinationals companies dropped, said Shahidul Islam, CEO of VIPB Asset Management.

"We saw extraordinary policy tightening," he remarked.

VIPB has investments worth hundreds of crores in shares of listed firms, but it selectively invests in companies that are well-governed, such as MNCs.

Shahidul said the profit drop among MNCs was relatively lower than that seen at other listed firms. He hoped that MNCs and well-governed companies would continue to do better in the future as a level playing field is expected to be reinstated.

The performance of MNCs varies depending



on their product lines as consumption of less essential products was impacted in recent months amid stubborn inflation, said Mir Ariful Islam, managing director and chief executive officer of Sandhani Asset Management.

Inflation has remained above 9 percent since March 2023, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Moreover, as government spending on the Annual Development Program was cut, cement producers were impacted, Islam said, adding that the overall construction sector is under pressure in the face of high inflation.

So, all construction-related firms have been impacted. Profits of LafargeHolcim Bangladesh fell 43 percent to Tk 51 crore in the October to December quarter.

In 2024, the net sales of LafargeHolcim Bangladesh stood at Tk 2,754 crore, a 3 percent decrease from the previous year. However, its net profit plunged 36 percent to Tk 381 crore.

The company claimed that its business was impacted by the political changeover in August last year and the challenging macroeconomic environment.

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## Govt plans smaller budget with 6% GDP growth target

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The interim government is planning to prepare a small budget with a 6 percent GDP growth target for the next fiscal year considering the sluggish economy and low revenue collection.

Officials said the finance ministry has already started working to this end after receiving directives from the chief adviser, with Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed set to begin pre-budgetary meetings with different stakeholders from next week.

Ahmed will preside over the series of meetings, the first of which will be held on Sunday featuring various economists. Later, the finance ministry will call upon business leaders, economic reporters and related other individuals.

But as the country's parliament is absent, he may announce the proposed budget for fiscal year (FY) 2025-26 on air.

Ahmed said they will complete the pre-budget meetings by April.

"No ambitious goals will be set in the upcoming national budget, and the GDP growth target will be set lower," he told The Daily Star.

Officials of the finance ministry said they had a long discussion with the Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus last month, where they presented a draft plan for formulating the budget.

The chief adviser then issued directives for the draft plan and those are now being

incorporated, according to a senior official of the finance ministry.

As per the current plan, the GDP growth target for FY26 will be set at 6 percent, which is lower than the 6.75 percent being targeted in this year's budget.

However, the GDP growth target could be lowered to 5.25 percent in the revised budget for FY25 considering the damage caused by multiple floods and the interim government's contractionary monetary policy aimed at containing inflation.

### Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed is set to begin pre-budgetary meetings with different stakeholders from next week

Besides, GDP growth in the ongoing fiscal year is low as there was political unrest and an unstable business environment. But the growth will likely be higher next year thanks to gradual improvements in the economic environment, the officials said.

Multilateral lenders like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank have also forecasted lower growth for the current fiscal year and enlarged the growth for the next.

Meanwhile, the targeted inflation rate for FY26 may rise to 6.5 percent while it was around 8 percent in the budget for the ongoing year.

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# Shahab Uddin Khan re-elected as president of KBCCI

# বাংলাদেশ সড়ক পরিবহন কর্পোরেশন

২১, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০

[www.brtc.gov.bd](http://www.brtc.gov.bd)

বিআরটিসি'র অযোগ্য ঘোষিত ২২টি গাড়ী নিলামে বিক্রয়ের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১।	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	:	সড়ক পরিবহন ও মহাসড়ক বিভাগ।
২।	বিক্রয় সন্ধান নাম	:	চেয়ারম্যান, বিআরটিসি।
৩।	বিক্রয় পদ্ধতি	:	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
৪।	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং	:	৩৪.০৪.০০০০.০১৭.০০.৬২৪.২৪
৫।	দরপত্র সিডিউল পাওয়ার স্থান	:	<a href="http://www.brtc.gov.bd">www.brtc.gov.bd</a> হতে ডাউনলোডকৃত সিডিউল।
৬।	ডাউনলোডকৃত দরপত্র সিডিউল গ্রহণের তারিখ ও শেষ সময়	:	১৭/০৩/২০২৫ ইং হতে ১৬/০৪/২০২৫ ইং এবং বিকাল ৫:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
৭।	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	:	দরপত্রের প্রতিটি সিডিউলের মূল্যাবাদ ৫,০০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার) টাকা (আকেংযোগ্য) "চেয়ারম্যান, বিআরটিসি'র" অনুকূলে যে কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংক হতে গৃহীত ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার এর মাধ্যমে ডাউনলোডকৃত দরপত্র সিডিউলের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে। সিডিউলের মূল্যাবাদ পে-অর্ডার ব্যক্তি দরপত্র বাতিলযোগ্য।
৮।	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	১৭/০৩/২০২৫ ইং দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত ক্রয় বিভাগ (৯ম তলা), বিআরটিসি, ২১, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০ হতে ডাকযোগ্য/কুরিয়ারযোগে দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে (ডাকযোগ্য/কুরিয়ারযোগে প্রেরিত দরপত্র প্রধান কার্যালয়, ক্রয় বিভাগ ১৭/০৪/২০২৫ ইং দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে না পৌঁছালে দরপত্র গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না)।
৯।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	১৭/০৪/২০২৫ ইং দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকায় বিআরটিসি, ক্রয় বিভাগ (৯ম তলা), ২১, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০।
১০।	দরপত্রের সাথে জামানত (আর্নেটম্যান)	:	মোট উক্ত মূল্যের ন্যূনতম ১০% জামানত (আর্নেটম্যান) "চেয়ারম্যান, বিআরটিসি'র" অনুকূলে যে কোন রাষ্ট্রাধিকার/সিডিউল ব্যাংক হতে প্রদত্ত পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট এর মাধ্যমে ডাউনলোডকৃত দরপত্র সিডিউলের সাথে জমা করতে হবে।
১১।	সিডিউলের সাথে যে সমস্ত ডকুমেন্টস সংযুক্ত করতে হবে	:	(ক) <a href="http://www.brtc.gov.bd">www.brtc.gov.bd</a> হতে ডাউনলোডকৃত সিডিউল, (খ) ট্রেন লাইসেন্স, (গ) আদারক প্রত্যয়ন পত্র, (ঘ) ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদপত্র, (ঙ) ব্যাংক সঞ্চালতার সনদপত্র, (চ) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র, (ছ) ০২ কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের রব্বান ছবি। দরপত্র সিডিউলে বর্ণিত কাগজপত্র হাল নাগাল নবায়িত এবং প্রথম শ্রেণীর কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত করে দাখিল করতে হবে।
১২।	বিক্রয়তর্য মালামালের সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ	:	বিআরটিসি'র অযোগ্য ঘোষিত ২২টি গাড়ী (বিকল বাস, একতলা বাস, কার ও জীপ) নিলামে বিক্রয়।
১৩।	দরপত্র আবেদনকারীর নাম ও পদবী	:	ইমাম হোসাইন, মাসেনজার (ক্রয়)।
১৪।	দরপত্র আবেদনকারীর অফিসের ঠিকানা ও টেলিফোন নং	:	ক্রয় বিভাগ, ৯ম তলা, বিআরটিসি, ২১, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০, ৪১০৫১০৪০।
১৫।	কর্তৃপক্ষের ক্ষমতা	:	কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কার্য দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন বা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ কিংবা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণসহ দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী সংযোজন, সংকোচন, পরিমার্জন ও পরিবর্তনের ক্ষমতা রাখেন এবং সর্বশেষে কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধাই হুজুর বলে গণ্য হবে।
১৬।	নির্বোধনা	:	অসম্পূর্ণ, ভ্রষ্টাঙ্ক ও জামানতবিহীন (আর্নেটম্যান) দরপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।

*(Signature)*  
১৩/০৩/২৫

ইমাম হোসাইন  
মাসেনজার (ক্রয়)  
বিআরটিসি।

GD-659



# NBR halves source tax on imported fruits

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has halved the source tax on imported fresh fruits, including oranges, malta, grapes, apples, and pears, reducing it to 5 percent in an effort to keep domestic prices stable during Ramadan and beyond.

A notification regarding this decision was issued on Wednesday and was made public yesterday by the tax administration.

The NBR made this decision following a recommendation from the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) to lower duties and taxes on fresh fruits, aiming to reduce prices and make them more affordable.

Earlier, the BTTC had recommended reducing the advance tax on fresh fruit imports from 10 percent to 2 percent and rationalising the 20 percent regulatory duty.

On January 9, the NBR increased the supplementary duty (SD) on the import of certain dry and fresh fruits, such as nuts and betel nuts, to 45 percent from the previous 30 percent.

As a result, the rise in prices of imported fruits has dealt a fresh blow to consumers, who were already cutting back on these items due to higher duties.

This mid-fiscal year move by the government is widely interpreted as an attempt to increase revenue collection and meet conditions set by the International



PHOTO: TITU DAS

Monetary Fund (IMF) for its ongoing \$4.7 billion loan programme for Bangladesh.

Following the NBR's move, retailers were charging Tk 20 to Tk 30 more per kilogramme (kg) for various fruits, including apples, oranges, grapes, and sweet oranges, forcing consumers to reduce their purchases amid persistently

high inflation for nearly two years.

On top of that, businesses and the BTTC have proposed reverting the duty to its previous rate.

Amid the dollar crisis, the government has been discouraging fruit imports in recent years to conserve foreign exchange. Fruit imports, as reflected in the

settlement of letters of credit (LCs), rose 7.49 percent year-on-year to \$128 million in the July-January period, up from \$119.55 million a year ago.

However, the opening of LCs stood 3 percent lower in the July-January period of this fiscal year compared to a year ago, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

## Factories must clear workers' dues before 20th Ramadan

Labour ministry says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The labour and employment ministry has asked all factories to clear workers' due salaries and Eid allowance by the 20th of Ramadan.

Labour and Employment Secretary AHM Shafiquezaman made the call during a tripartite meeting held at Sromo Bhaban in Dhaka on Wednesday.

It was also decided in the meeting that no worker will be terminated before the Eid festival.

Workers' holidays will be determined according to labour laws but may be fixed through consultation between workers and factory management, according to a statement released by the ministry on Wednesday.

The meeting also decided that factory management would pay workers 15 days' salary for March based on their capacity.

A request will be made to the finance division, the finance ministry, and the central bank to release funds for cash incentives on export receipts for factories, including those under the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The law-and-order situation will be further strengthened, and the central monitoring cell will act accordingly.

Banks in industrial zones will remain open on March 28 and 29 to facilitate transactions, according to the statement.

## Most listed MNCs saw a drop

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Singer Bangladesh saw a sharp climb in losses in the quarter, which rose to Tk 54 crore, more than three times the loss of Tk 15 core that it had seen a year ago.

The company attributed the increased loss primarily to a net loss stemming from increased financing costs.

The finance costs for all companies rose as interest rates in the banking sector rose.

At the end of December 2024, the weighted average interest rate at scheduled banks was close to 12 percent while it was around 9 percent one year prior, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

Increased payments for costs and expenses,

coupled with stagnant collections from sales, were among other reasons.

Moreover, consumption of electronics and home appliances was also impacted due to high inflation, so Singer Bangladesh was affected.

"Another factor is that local companies have become more aggressive. So, they are grabbing the market at a low margin, impacting the multinational companies," Ariful said.

Unilever Consumer Care also took a hit, especially as the sales of its most popular products are reliant on people having disposable income, which has been eroded due to persistent inflation.

British American Tobacco's (BAT's) profit fell slightly to Tk 428 crore in the recently ended quarter compared to Tk 432 crore compared to the year prior.

Usually, consumption of cigarettes rises during an economic depression, Ariful added. However, maybe consumers moved to products in the lower segment. This may have impacted BAT's profit, he opined.

Regarding the business outlook, the asset manager said it is a good sign that the government's fiscal and monetary policies are working and contributing to easing inflation. Once the macroeconomic situation improves, business will rebound.

"I hope it will take six months to one year for economic indicators to return to normalcy and for the confidence of people to be boosted. If a return to normalcy takes more time, business will take more time to rebound."

Political stability, macroeconomic stability and consumer confidence are crucial for business in the coming months, he added.

VIPB's Shahidul, also a former president of the CFA Society, Bangladesh, said, "The worst is over. I hope performance of the companies is going to bounce back as macroeconomic indicators are already showing signs of improvement."

## Gold trades near record levels

REUTERS

Gold prices traded near record high levels on Thursday, fuelled by demand for safe-haven assets amid tariff concerns and a US inflation report that reinforced expectations of a future rate cut.

Spot gold gained 0.3 percent to \$2,940.99 an ounce, as of 0856 GMT, about \$16 shy from the record peak. Due to the economic uncertainty caused by US tariffs, spot gold hit a record high of \$2,956.15 on February 24.

US gold futures were up 0.1 percent at \$2,950.80.

"Gold continues to be supported by the prospect of a tariff-driven economic slowdown, potentially bringing forward US Fed rate cut expectations," Ole Hansen, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank, said. "I maintain my bullish stance on gold, expecting an economic slowdown or even stagflation to drive demand and price of gold higher."

US President Donald Trump's fluctuating trade policies - imposing and delaying tariffs on Canada and Mexico, while raising duties on Chinese goods - have roiled the global financial markets. In response, China and Canada hit back with tariffs of their own.

## Many Americans see Trump's actions on economy as too erratic

REUTERS, Washington

A majority of Americans believe President Donald Trump is being too "erratic" in his moves to shake up the US economy, as his imposition of tariffs against some of the nation's top trading partners hammers stock markets, a new Reuters/Ipsos poll found.

Some 57 percent of respondents, including one in three Republicans, said the president's policies have been unsteady as his efforts to tax imports have set off a global trade war, according to the two-day poll that closed on Wednesday.

Americans instead want Trump to continue to focus on combating high prices even as there are growing concerns his policies will drive costs up, not down, the poll found. Trump's imposition of tariffs on allies such as Canada and Mexico and his refusal to rule out a

recession has spooked US markets. The S&P 500 has lost more than \$3 trillion in value since its all-time peak last month.

In response, the White House has said that some short-term economic pain might be necessary for Trump to implement his trade agenda, which is intended to drive manufacturing back to the US.

Wall Street has been shaken by some of Trump's whipsaw policy reversals. On Tuesday, Trump announced more severe tariffs on Canadian metals - causing stocks to fall - and then dropped the threat later that day after Canada made a concession.

Overall, 44 percent of respondents said they approved of the job Trump was doing as president, unchanged from a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted March 3-4. He got particularly weak marks on the issue of the cost of living, where just 32 percent of respondents approved of his performance.

## Many banks unlikely

FROM PAGE B1

bank's tax after profit. However, the amount of dividend declared may not exceed 30 percent of the bank's paid-up capital.

The central bank notice said that banks that can maintain a minimum of 15 percent capital adequacy ratio, including a 2.5 percent capital conservation buffer against risk-based assets, after meeting other expenses,

will be able to pay cash and stock dividends.

In such cases, their dividend payout ratio may not exceed a maximum of 50 percent.

Banks that maintain a minimum 12.5 percent capital adequacy ratio, including a capital conservation buffer of 2.5 percent, can also pay cash and stock dividends, but their dividend payout ratio will not exceed a maximum

of 40 percent.

Banks that maintain less than 12.5 percent capital adequacy ratio, including conservation buffer, but have a minimum ratio of over 10 percent will be able to declare only stock dividends.

According to this policy, banks paying dividends will have to submit a report to the Bangladesh Bank within 7 days of the declaration of dividends.

## Govt plans smaller budget

FROM PAGE B1

The previous government had fixed the inflation target at 6.5 percent in the original budget.

The size of the draft budget presented to the chief adviser last month was about Tk 8.48 lakh crore, including an allotment for Annual Development Programmes (ADP) worth Tk 2.7 lakh crore.

Finance ministry officials said the chief adviser directed them to cut the budget short even further, which may result in it reaching Tk 8 lakh crore while the ADP size may remains Tk 2.4 lakh crore.

**The size of the draft budget presented to the chief adviser last month was about Tk 8.48 lakh crore**

The current fiscal years' original budget was Tk 7.97 lakh but was later revised by the interim government at Tk 7.44 lakh crore.

"Though the budget size increases every year, the upcoming budget may be down from the previous year's original budget," the official said.

Adviser Ahmed did not name the number, but he did say the size would not be much more than the current fiscal's budget.

"We will also prepare the ADP allocation pragmatically," he said.

The ADP allocation was Tk 2.65 lakh crore in the original budget, which was revised by Tk 2.16 lakh crore.



**North-West Power Generation Company Ltd.**  
ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 & ISO 45001:2018 Certified  
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

**Office of the Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)**  
Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)  
Soydabad, Sirajganj.

Ref: 27.28.8878.101.07.001.19.14.18

Date: 12/03/2025

**e-Tender Notice**

The following e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date
1	1077544	Procurement of different Cooling System Dosing Chemicals/24-25.	11/03/2025	09/04/2025, 15:00	10/04/2025
2	1073080	Supply of Hydraulic Cylinders Repair Kit and Others.	12/03/2025	09/04/2025, 15:45	10/04/2025
3	1068320 (Retender ID-1030845)	Supply of Jockey Pump for fire Water System.	12/03/2025	09/04/2025, 15:30	10/04/2025

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))



**Engr. Brojendra Kumar Sarker**  
Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)  
Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)  
NWPGL, Soydabad, Sirajganj.


Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Nazirpur Govt. Technical School & College, Nazirpur, Pirojpur.  
e-mail : [najirpurtsc@gmail.com](mailto:najirpurtsc@gmail.com), Web : [www.tscnazirpur.pirojpur.gov.bd](http://www.tscnazirpur.pirojpur.gov.bd)  
Memo No: tsc/nazir/tender:24-25/450 Date: 12-03-2025

**e-Tender Notice (OTM)**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following Goods.

Tender ID	Description of Goods	Tender opening date & time
1085787	Supply of Raw Materials & Spare Parts (Code: 3256105))	13/03/2025 Time: 15.00
1085790	Supply & Installation of Computer Materials (Code: 3255101)	13/03/2025 Time: 15.05
1085791	Supply of Others Contingency (Code: 3255105)	13/03/2025 Time: 15.10
1085792	Supply & Installation of Engineering & Others Machineries (Code: 4112304)	13/03/2025 Time: 15.15
1085793	Supply & Installation of Office Accessories (Code: 4112310)	13/03/2025 Time: 15.20
1085794	Supply & Installation of Teaching & Learning Materials (Code: 4112312)	13/03/2025 Time: 15.25
1085795	Supply & Installation of Furniture (Code: 4112314)	13/03/2025 Time: 15.30

This is online Tender, where only e-tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP System Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

  
**Engr. Md. Mostafizur Rahman Khan, Principal**  
Nazirpur Govt. Technical School & College, Nazirpur, Pirojpur. Phone:01748-162450



**বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড**  
**Bangladesh Power Dev. Board**

Directorate of Purchase  
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E-mail: [dir\\_purchase@bpdb.gov.bd](mailto:dir_purchase@bpdb.gov.bd)

**e-Tender Notice**

The following e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of:

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Reference No.	Description of goods/works	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time	Opening date and time
01	1086778	PP-GRL-01 (FY:24-25)	27.11.0000.304.25.115.25 Date: 13/03/2025	Supply of Meter Batteries for the Prepaid Meters Installed in BPDB	10 Apr-2025 13:00	10 Apr-2025 14:00	10 Apr-2025 14:00

This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

For more details please contact to the PE's Support Desk (01768595879).



**Md. Nannu Miah**  
ID No. 1-01304  
Director  
Directorate of Purchase  
BPDB, Dhaka



# Female banker ratio edges up after post-pandemic decline

SUKANTA HALDER

After slightly declining since the Covid-19 outbreak, the proportion of women among bankers edged up last year, giving hope of a more gender-inclusive banking sector.

In 2020, females accounted for over 18 percent of the sector's workforce, according to the Bangladesh Bank's (BB) "Gender Equality Report of Banks and Financial Institutions".

In 2021, it declined to 16.03 percent. Yet last year, it stood at 17.57 percent.

In other words, there were 37,649 women among the sector's 214,245 officials and employees.

However, one expert was of the opinion that this was no significant positive trend. Instead, it suggests that women are not truly welcomed to this sector, he said.

## WHAT THE BANK AUTHORITIES ARE SAYING

Mahia Juned, additional managing director and chief operating officer of City Bank PLC, said during the pandemic, a few female officers and employees left their jobs.

"This was because banking operations had to continue at that time. However, many of their families did not allow them to go to their offices," she said.

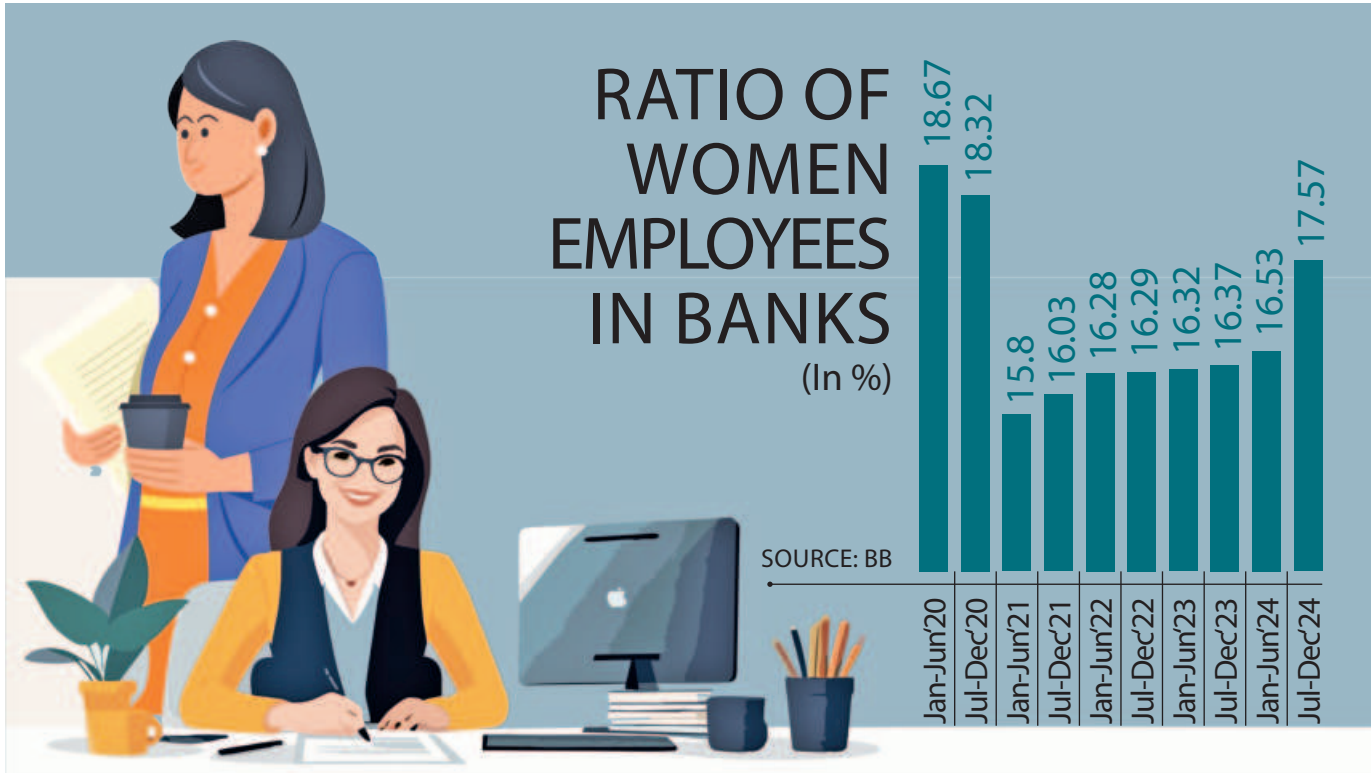
She added that due to business downturns, cost-cutting measures were implemented, leading to a reduction in hiring in 2020 and 2021. "This trend is reflected in the regulator's data," she noted.

Juned further said as business conditions improved, hiring also increased.

"Speaking about our bank specifically, we have actively focused on increasing female recruitment," she said.

Currently, females make up over 18.50 percent of the bank's workforce, which was around 16 percent just one and a half years ago.

"Our goal is to increase the proportion of female employees to 20 percent by



2027," she said.

Juned also said for the past 13 years, the bank has prioritised hiring women. "A decade ago, there were hardly any female officials at the senior level," she said.

Mohammad Ali, managing director and chief executive officer of Pubali Bank PLC, said the banking sector, especially at the operations level, offers good job opportunities for women.

"It is suitable in every aspect—work-friendly and respectful," he said.

Due to the pandemic, some jobs were cut, and some employees resigned voluntarily, he explained.

"If we consider Dhaka district alone, female participation in every bank would be around 30 percent. In some places, it is 40 percent," added Ali.

Interest in banking jobs among females

has increased and will grow even further, he said.

"One notable factor is that many women prefer to stay in Dhaka since their husbands or family members reside there," he added.

In 2019, female participation in the total workforce at Mutual Trust Bank PLC was 19.06 percent. It has since increased to reach 19.43 percent last year.

This came about for the enabling of a women-friendly work environment encouraging work-life balance, and implementation of a robust anti-harassment policy, said Ashraf Ali, head of organisational development and learning at MTB Group Human Resources.

Any decline since the pandemic can be attributed to factors such as migration to foreign countries, cultural expectations

to care for children and family members, and the pursuit of better opportunities in other companies, he added.

## HOW MUCH IMPACT HAS COVID-19 HAD?

A staggering 7,167 bankers lost their jobs between April 2020 and September 2021 as private commercial banks desperately tried to cut operational costs amid a business slowdown caused by the Covid-19.

These people, who were either fired or forced to resign, represented nearly 6 percent of the 122,912 officials and employees in the banking sector of Bangladesh as of June 2021.

At that time, 51 private banks had informed the BB that they had sacked 1,292 employees, while another 5,875 resigned.

READ MORE ON B2

# BREB cancels power purchase deal with Doreen

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (BREB) has cancelled the power purchase agreement (PPA) for the 22 megawatt (MW) plant of Doreen Power Generations and Systems Limited located in Narsingdi.

The BREB is not interested in renewing the PPA and has terminated the deal for Doreen's Narsingdi plant, the private power producer said in a disclosure on the website of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), citing a letter from the state agency.

Shares of the publicly listed company fell 2.69 percent compared to yesterday before closing at Tk 21.7 yesterday at the DSE.

In February last year, Doreen said the BREB had given consent for the continuation of operations of its Narsingdi power plant as per the terms, conditions, and tariff schedule until a new PPA was signed after negotiation on a "no electricity, no payment" basis.

At that time, the electricity producer said it was in the process of negotiating tariffs and other terms and conditions for the renewal of the PPA with the BREB.

In its disclosure yesterday at the DSE, Doreen said the BREB informed it about the cancellation through a letter on March 11 this year.

Doreen's earnings per share (EPS) dropped by nearly half to Tk 0.53 for the October-December period of 2024 from Tk 1.03 in the same period a year ago due to a significant increase in finance costs of subsidiary companies resulting from an interest rate spike and the devaluation of Bangladesh's currency against the US dollar.

As a result, the company's profit declined in the first half of the year.

During the July-December period of this financial year, Doreen's EPS fell 29 percent year-on-year to Tk 2.01.

Incorporated in 2007, Doreen has three power plants in Tangail, Feni, and Narsingdi.

The plants were supplying 66 MW of electricity to the BREB.

Muhammad Amzad Shakil, company secretary of Doreen, said all three plants have remained shut since December 2024.

At present, Doreen is supplying 225 MW of electricity to the DPDB from its furnace oil-based plants, he said.

# Trump threatens further tariffs as EU, Canada retaliate

REUTERS, Washington

Donald Trump threatened on Wednesday to escalate a global trade war with further tariffs on European Union goods, as major US trading partners said they would retaliate for trade barriers already erected by the US president.

Just hours after Trump's 25 percent duties on all US steel and aluminum imports took effect, Trump said he would impose additional penalties if the EU follows through with its plan to enact counter tariffs on some US goods next month. "Whatever they charge us, we're charging them," Trump told reporters at the White House.

Trump's hyper-focus on tariffs has rattled investor, consumer and business confidence and raised recession fears. He also has frayed relations with Canada, a close ally and major trading partner, by repeatedly threatening to annex the neighboring country.

Canada, the biggest foreign supplier of steel and aluminum to the United States, announced 25 percent retaliatory tariffs on those metals along with computers, sports equipment and other products worth \$20 billion in total. Canada has already imposed tariffs worth a similar amount on US goods in response to broader tariffs by Trump.

"We will not stand idly by while our iconic steel and aluminum industries are being unfairly targeted," Canada's Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc said.

## Trump said he would impose additional penalties if the EU follows through with its plan to enact counter tariffs on some US goods next month

Canada's central bank also cut interest rates to prepare for economic disruption.

Trump's action to bulk up protections for American steel and aluminum producers restores effective tariffs of 25 percent on all imports and extends the duties to hundreds of downstream products, from nuts and bolts to bulldozer blades and soda cans.

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Trump would impose trade protections on copper as well.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll found 57 percent of Americans think Trump is being too erratic in his effort to shake up the US economy, and 70 percent expect the tariffs will make purchases more expensive.

## EU LESS EXPOSED

The 27 countries of the European Union are less exposed, as only a "small fraction" of targeted products are exported to the United States, according to Germany's Kiel Institute.

The EU's counter-measures would target up to \$28 billion worth of US goods like dental floss, diamonds, bathrobes and bourbon - which likewise account for a small portion of the giant EU-US commercial relationship. Still, the liquor industry warned they would be "devastating" on its sector.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the bloc will resume talks with US officials.

"It is not in our common interest to burden our economies with such tariffs," she said.

At the White House, Trump said he would "of course" respond with further tariffs if the EU followed through on its plan. With Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin at his side, Trump criticized the EU member country for luring away US pharmaceutical companies.

In remarks delivered later at a White House ceremony, Martin touted the history of free trade between the two nations.

# Whether US is heading for recession or just 'detox', downturns are costly

REUTERS, Washington

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick says a recession would be "worth it" to get President Donald Trump's economic policies in place, while Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has spoken of a coming period of "detox" and Trump himself says the economy is in "transition."

However it plays out, history shows recessions - should it come to that - are costly affairs: The pain is never spread equally, and the outcome - from the length and depth of the downturn to the speed and breadth of recovery - is unpredictable.

## SHRINKING GDP

In general terms a recession is when the total output of an economy, called gross domestic product, declines in a meaningful way. One common rule of thumb is that when GDP contracts for two consecutive quarters, the country is in recession.

But that doesn't really capture it. The National Bureau of Economic Research's Business Cycle Dating Committee, which determines when recessions begin and end, looks beyond GDP at things like unemployment, personal income excluding government benefits, consumer spending and industrial production.

Those might deteriorate just a bit for a long time. Or they might crash so hard that it is obviously recessionary, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic when activity fell fast but rebounded quickly to yield only a two-month

recession, the shortest on record in the US.

By contrast, a sluggish economy in 2016 never tilted into a declared recession.

NBER never declares recessions in real time. That's left for others to ponder by looking at things like changes in the unemployment rate, where rises of a half percentage point or more within a year have in the past meant recession is underway.

Nothing in hard data like unemployment, GDP or consumer spending currently suggests that is happening. The conversation is in the air because of recent surveys showing declining business and consumer sentiment, and because of memories of Trump's first term, when tariffs far smaller than those proposed now, and preceded by tax cuts, caused global economic growth to stall.

## WHAT CAUSES RECESSIONS?

As of January, the risk of a US recession was considered small. A low unemployment rate and rising wages meant consumers were continuing to spend, inflation was drifting down towards the Federal Reserve's 2 percent target, and the US central bank had cut interest rates by a full percentage point since September. Fed officials considered it a stable foundation for continued growth, and many economists thought the central bank had nailed a "soft landing" from the high inflation of 2021 and 2022.

That's a rare feat: Sometimes it is central bank policy that triggers a downturn, most famously in the early 1980s when then-Fed chief Paul Volcker sent the economy into a

painful recession with crushing interest rate hikes to tame high inflation.

This time, the volatility in sentiment, the declines in stock market wealth, and the worries of a coming drop in activity stemmed from Trump's move to rewire global trade with broad and steep tariffs on major US trading partners.

Such shocks are the other sources of downturns. The pandemic was another one, as was the combined shock in the early 2000s from the crash in tech stocks and the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US.

## WHO PAYS THE BILL?

Recessions come with costs. Business profits fall, as do stock prices, which can then amplify the impact as investors reduce their own consumption. Incomes fall and government deficits rise as more people qualify for benefits meant to offset economic weakness, known as automatic stabilisers.

One reason the pandemic shutdown gave way to a period of strong economic growth was the amount of government support under both the first Trump administration and former President Joe Biden. Both administrations left huge deficits in their wake, which some feel may limit the government's response this time if the economy does sink.

But typically the most notable recession feature is rising unemployment, a fact that puts the heaviest burden of any downturn on those thrown out of work.

Rising US unemployment tends to fall disproportionately on Blacks and Hispanics, but each downturn is different.



A customer shops for produce at a grocery store in Austin, Texas. There has been talk lately of stagflation, with growing concerns that economic growth will slow or even shrink while inflation rises on the back of the US tariffs aimed at Canada, Mexico, China and other trading partners.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

# India's retail inflation slips below 4% for first time in 6 months

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's retail inflation fell below 4 percent in February for the first time in six months mainly due to a decline in vegetable prices, giving the central bank room to cut rates further in coming meetings.

Annual retail inflation in February eased to 3.61 percent, below economists' estimate of 3.98 percent and the lowest since July. Inflation for January was revised to 4.26 percent from 4.31 percent.

Get the latest news from India and how it matters to the world with the Reuters India File newsletter. Sign up here.

The South Asian country's inflation has been within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) tolerance band of 2 percent-6 percent for four consecutive months.

The slower rate of inflation has been mainly aided by the fall in vegetable prices due to improved supplies on the back of favourable weather.

Food inflation eased to 3.75 percent in February, the lowest since May 2023, from a revised 5.97 percent in the previous month. Vegetable prices fell 1.07 percent year-on-year, compared with an 11.35 percent increase in January.

Prices of vegetables have been the main driver of inflation for over a year, with a rate of increase of more than 20 percent in nine out of the past 12 months.

"Inflation decelerated at a faster pace than expected as food corrected sharply in February, on the back of a year-on-year decline in vegetables and pulses," said Radhika Rao, economist at DBS Bank.

Prices of cereals rose 6.1 percent against a 6.24 percent increase in January, while those of pulses fell 0.35 percent compared to a 2.59 percent growth in the previous month.